

# Thriving in a time of turbulence: Nitto EMEA CEO Sam Strijckmans' vision for doing business in Europe in 2025 and beyond



## Navigating an era of uncertainty

As Europe enters 2025, businesses are facing an increasingly turbulent environment. Economic pressures, climate concerns, regulatory challenges and geopolitical instability are all converging, making long-term planning more complex than ever. Speaking at the Nitto Business Summit in Turin, Italy, in late 2024, Sam Strijckmans, CEO of Nitto EMEA and Executive Vice President of Nitto Denko Corporation, outlined his vision for thriving amid

uncertainty, urging businesses to rethink traditional strategies and embrace resilience, adaptability and innovation.

“Turbulence is not the same as crisis,” Mr. Strijckmans explained. “A crisis is sudden and demands immediate action, whereas turbulence is a prolonged state of instability. The biggest danger is to continue doing business with the same logic as yesterday.”

## Thriving, not just growing

At the core of Nitto’s strategy is the concept of thriving rather than simply growing. Growth, according to Mr. Strijckmans, is one-dimensional; thriving, on the other hand, is a multi-faceted approach that balances performance, sustainability and resilience. “Like pilots navigating through turbulence, businesses must reduce speed at times, assess their environment and make thoughtful adjustments without making decisions which are irreversible. The key is to remain close to the market, adaptable and prepared to pivot when necessary,” he noted.

This philosophy is particularly relevant given the shifting economic and sustainability landscape in Europe. Mr. Strijckmans pointed to hesitations in the green energy transition, with some companies adjusting their ambitious



targets due to economic uncertainties. At the same time, climate change remains a reality, making sustainable business practices not just an ethical responsibility but an economic necessity.

### **Balancing the E.U. Green Deal and industrial competitiveness**

One of the greatest challenges for European businesses in 2025 and beyond is finding the balance between sustainability and global competitiveness.

Mr. Strijckmans highlighted how companies must carefully weigh the E.U. Green Deal’s environmental ambitions against the need to remain competitive on a global scale.



“The solutions to climate change will come from industry, innovation and business leaders who take responsibility,” he stated. “Regulations are necessary but so is ensuring that Europe remains an attractive region for investment and production.”

The right strategy, according to Mr. Strijckmans, lies in co-creating solutions. Companies must work closely with customers, suppliers and policymakers to ensure that sustainability efforts remain commercially viable. “This is not about making irreversible decisions but about offering alternatives—letting customers choose when they are ready to transition to more sustainable solutions.”

### **The power of resilience: Lessons from Japan and Europe**

Resilience, Mr. Strijckmans emphasised, is key to long-term business success. He cited an intriguing statistic: 53% of companies worldwide that have lasted more than 200 years are based in Japan, while 19% are in Germany. The secret to their longevity? A business philosophy rooted in long-term responsibility.



“In Japan, the Sanpo-yoshi principle—‘three-way satisfaction’—ensures that business decisions benefit buyers, sellers and society as a whole,” he explained. “This mindset fosters trust, long-term sustainability and adaptability, all of which are crucial in today’s volatile business environment.”

Mr. Strijckmans encouraged European businesses to adopt a similar approach, embracing change rather than fearing it.



“Change is the reason why Nitto has thrived for 106 years,” he noted. “It is embedded in our philosophy: Change is opportunity.”

### **Innovation at the core: ESG as a business opportunity**

At Nitto, environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles are not an obstacle to profitability but a driver of business success. The company has integrated ESG deeply into its management and innovation

strategy, prioritising solutions that benefit both the planet and its bottom line.

“Some see ESG as a trade-off against financial performance, but we see it as an opportunity,” Mr. Strijckmans asserted. Nitto has signed up for Science-Based Targets, committed to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 46% (scope 1 & 2) and 25% (scope 3) by 2030, and aims to be climate neutral by 2050.

“Innovation will be key to achieving these targets,” he added. Nitto is investing in sustainable alternatives across multiple industries, including adhesive technology, electric vehicle components and biodegradable non-woven materials. A major milestone was reached in 2024, when a global leader in personal care decided to convert its entire wet wipes business to Nitto’s fully biodegradable alternative—a significant step in tackling microplastics pollution.

### **Preparing for 2030: The future of business in Europe**

Mr. Strijckmans believes that European businesses must be ready to lead the next wave of industrial transformation, guided by ESG principles, digitalisation and customer-driven innovation. “We are not just preparing for the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)—we have already started reporting voluntarily,” he revealed. Their first EMEA sustainability report was published in 2024 (<https://nitto-sustainability.com/>).

Nitto’s approach is to provide flexible solutions, allowing customers to transition at their own pace. “We still produce solvent-based adhesives where needed, but we also offer water-based, bio-derived and sustainable alternatives,” he explained. “This gives our customers the option to switch when they are ready, rather than forcing them into irreversible decisions.”







## The role of businesses in shaping the future

In closing, Mr. Strijckmans reiterated that business leaders must take responsibility for shaping the future. Regulations, climate policies and market fluctuations will continue, but the key to thriving lies in resilience, agility and innovation.

“Europe has the potential to be a global leader in sustainable industry,” he stated. “But we must ensure that business remains competitive, adaptable and

forward-thinking.”

Mr. Strijckmans’ message was clear: Those who embrace change, prioritise innovation and balance sustainability with commercial viability will not just survive the turbulence of 2025 and beyond—they will thrive.

For more information, visit <https://www.nitto.com/eu/en>.